GLOBAL BROADBAND AND INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

TASK ORDER 2 GBI CORE PROGRAM SUPPORT:
GBI PORTAL FINAL REPORT

September 2010

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INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

The Global Broadband and Innovations Program is a USAID program aimed at improving the use of an access to ICTs in support of the Agency's development work. The program is primarily focused on providing technical assistance, but its original iteration had a very significant communications component as well. In addition to providing technical assistance to make telecommunications more accessible, the GBI program sought to promote the use of ICTs within the Agency as a method of increasing demand for the services as well as improving the effectiveness and efficiency with which the Agency implemented ICT4D activities.

The center of this communications component was to be a web portal, established as a concrete deliverable for the GBI Program. At a minimum, Integra was tasked with building and maintaining the GBI Web Portal for the purposes of marketing of the GBI Program. The portal was also meant to serve as a clearinghouse of information on the use of ICTs in the various sectors of development.

Section C of the Task Order (AID-CIO-10-00001) lays out several objectives, for which the portal was intended to address:

> "[Integra shall] Research and deploy available ICT-related implementation models and analysis of ICT solution sets for broadening the adoption by USAID – Undertake research and analysis, and subsequently packaging for USAID use, a wide range of ICT related solution sets that provide direct value-added support to USAID's program. These materials will be made available in a range of formats, including electronic, hard copy, websites, blogs, briefings, meetings, and formal presentations." (Section C.3 (a) page 15)

The Task Order also asked for the specific promotion of mobile applications.

> "Promote mobile Application Scale and Replication- Document and promote broad leveraging of successful lessons-learned of mobile applications to facilitate scale, reuse-replication. This will be achieved through establishing rich information sources relative to what USAID is doing as well as other development entities, as well as keeping USAID's Program Offices and Missions aware of innovative and advances approaches for leveraging mobile applications within the international development context." (Section C.3(d), page 17)

Integra's Work Plan (dated October 6, 2010) clearly outlines the purpose and function of the portal:

> "Deliverable #3 Build and Maintain the GBI Web Portal

A further component of outreach will be the GBI program website. However, the website is more than just an outreach tool. It will be a portal for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and innovation, and as such will be a facilitator of technical assistance. Because of its multiple roles, the GBI Web Portal is treated as an independent deliverable." (Integra Oct2010 Workplan, page 2)

This report will lay out what Integra did, in terms of designing, launching and maintain the GBI Portal as well as how it integrated the portal into a larger communications campaign to support the GBI Program.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

In order to integrate the portal with other communications related activities, and to make the most effective use of these communications tools, Integra wrote a multifaceted communications plan for the Global Broadband and Innovations Program. The four objectives of the campaign were as follows:

1. Increase awareness about the Global Broadband and Innovations Program (GBI) and its services

2. Increase understanding of the effective use of ICTs within USAID programs and missions

3. Support technical assistance to USAID programs and missions on ICT4D interventions that support the Agency's core development practices.

4. Identify and/or create innovative ICT4D solutions

The campaign proposed a mix of online and print products as well as in-person events to achieve these objectives. The following table shows how each communications product addresses the larger communication goals.

Communication Goal	GBI Portal	eNewsletter	Printed Materials	Tech Talks	Social Media
Increase awareness about the GBI and its services	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Increase understanding of the effective use of ICTs within USAID programs and missions	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Support technical assistance to USAID programs and missions	✔				
Identify and/or create innovative ICT4D solutions	✔		✔	✔	✔

Although the communications program was discontinued after 15 months, its trajectory to success was evident. This report will examine the strategies, elements and techniques employed by the communications campaign, and evaluate their impact in meeting the campaign's objectives.

Below is a description of each element of the communications campaign, along with metrics and analytics which show the impact it made on the success of the GBI Program.

GBI PORTAL

DESCRIPTION

The centerpiece of the campaign was the GBI Knowledge Portal, a network of websites aimed at bringing ICT4D information, resources, knowledge management and professional networking to development professionals. The portal was made up of 11 sites, each of which focused on the implementation of information and communication technologies in each of USAID's main sectors: Agriculture, Democracy & Governance, Economic Growth, Education, Environment, Health, and Humanitarian Assistance. It also had special sites dedicated to Connectivity issues, Mobile Money (added in Summer 2011), and Gender. The front page of the portal provided a magazine style display of the latest news in each of these sectors.

The site also provided extensive information about the GBI program, its background and predecessors, and latest developments.

Content on the GBI Portal was added daily, in the form of news articles, analysis, a document database and a project library. It also integrated advanced, interactive multimedia, such as interactive maps, info-graphics, and videos. In addition to the news and resources, the GBI Portal provided a networking platform for development professionals to connect, share information and collaborate.

Website analytics show that the Portal was steadily growing. For example, on January 12, 2012 (just ten months after its launch), the portal had had 26,355 visits. By the end of June 2012, just six months later, it had received 69,869 visits. It had more than doubled its visits, in almost half the time. (See appendix A)

MEETING OBJECTIVES

Of all of the campaign's elements, the only GBI Portal worked to meet all 4 of the primary objectives.

OBJECTIVE #1 INCREASE AWARENESS ABOUT THE GLOBAL BROADBAND AND INNOVATIONS PROGRAM AND ITS SERVICES.

The home page of the GBI Portal directed users to information about the GBI program, its projects and services, as well as a regularly updated blog.

This blog, called "GBI Highlights," featured program updates and news relevant to GBI's work. Contributors included USAID/GBI personnel as well as staff from GBI implementers.

In addition to these elements, the Portal presented the following pages:

- About GBI

- GBI Leadership

- Implementing Partners

- GBI Services

- Support to Missions and Bureaus

- Infrastructure Specific Support

- Sector Specific Support

A "Contact GBI" page provided users with a way to contact the GBI Program Manager or the Portal Administrator.

OBJECTIVE #2 INCREASE AWARENESS ABOUT ICT4D.

In addition to program information, the GBI Portal provided a wealth of ICT4D information for the USAID community and beyond.

Figure 1. GBI Posts by Sector
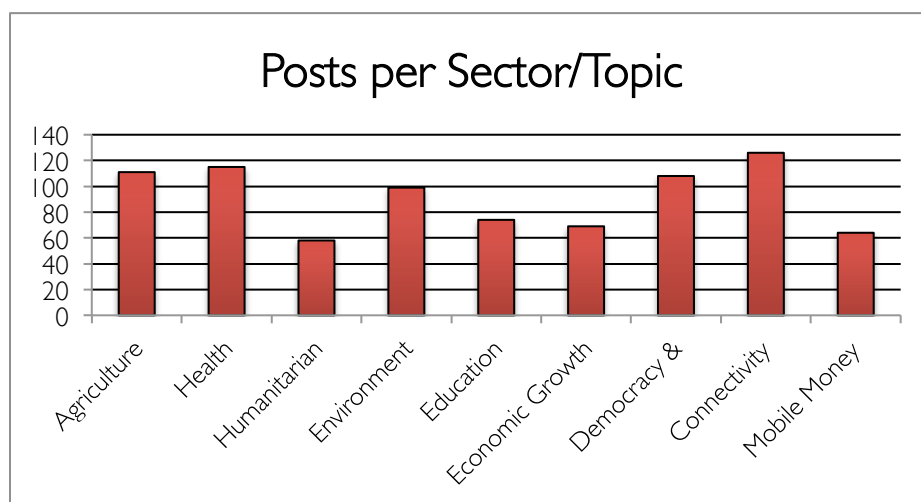
Posts and articles for each sector were researched and written by the Integra team as well as other members of the portal. Visitors to the portal were encouraged to produce content, and among those who did were ICT4D superstars Wayan Vota (Inveneo), Linda Raftree (PLAN USA), Tim Katlic (OnlineAfrica.com), Gisli Olafsson (NetHope), and John Owen

(Microenterprise Access to Banking Services -USAID). The portal also enjoyed publication arrangements with GSMA's Mobile Money for the Unbanked Blog and IT News Africa.

By May 2012, the portal had 1247 posts, distributed across each of the sectors. As you can see from the following graph, Connectivity/Infrastructure topics had the most posts.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to articles, the portal provided a number of other useful resources. A Project Library and Document Database were housed on the portal, and this proved to be a quite useful collection. At the time of its closing, the Document Database held 235 reports on ICTs in development. The Project Library catalogued and described 62 ICT4D projects.

NETWORKING AND ENGAGEMENT

The Portal was more than just a clearinghouse of information onICT4D activities. It was a place for professionals interested in ICT in development to meet, collaborate and engage each other, both within and beyond their sectors.

A "ladder of engagement" strategy was employed in order to enhance the user experience and increase participation. This strategy included walking site visitors through the following phases: Observing, Following, Endorsing, Contributing, and Owning. The following table describes these phases as well as shows indicators of success that were collected.

Figure 2. Phases of GBI Engagement Strategy

Phase	Objective	Action	Indicators
#1 Observing	Create awareness about the use of ICT in development programs	Initial and repeat visits to knowledge portal	• 69,869 site visits • 53,626 unique visitors
#2 Following	Establish GBI Portal as reliable source of information	Subscribe to RSS feeds, newsletter, portal membership	• 255 members • 351 email subscribers • 140 likes on Facebook[1] • 361 Twitter Followers
#3 Endorsing	Encourage members to share what they have found with colleagues	Forward information, share links, make referrals, participate in	• At least 169 links to portal content[2]

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[1] Facebook Insights began collecting information July 19, 2011
[2] Site linking to portal content include World Bank, US Department of State, TED.com, Harvard University, Oxford University, Global Voices Online, Pulitzer Online, among others

		social functions on site	• 142 instances of people talking about GBI Facebook page
#4 Contributing	Motivate members to generated content	Write or review portal content, join working groups (when available)	• 7 guest bloggers • 9 Working groups, with 30+ members • 211 comments on posts
#5 Owning & Leading	Encourage heavily invested participation	Create new working group, soliciting content from others	• 3 groups created by members

OBJECTIVE #3 PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In addition to raising awareness about the GBI program and about the greater field of ICT4D, the GBI Portal also served as a space to provide and augment technical assistance.
A key example of that was the suite of pages dedicated to Universal Service Funds.

The USF pages were created to provide background information about the concept of USF, identify trends in universal service, provide resources for those interested in improving fund management, get feedback from potential clients, and direct visitors to GBI's USF assistance programs.

These pages used a variety of multimedia, including an interactive USF map, downloadable documents, slide presentations, a private working group for those involved in managing a USF, and video interviews with USF administrators. These pages served to not only provide information about universal service, but they also provided legitimacy and background resources for GBI consultants in the field.

OBECTIVE #4 IDENTIFY INNOVATIVE ICT4D SOLUTIONS.

This objective was met daily through the publication of posts on all 11 sector sites. However several special projects were used to bring special attention to key audiences.

MAPPING ICTS ALONG THE AG VALUE CHAIN

One such project was the creation of an inventory of ICT solutions used in Agriculture. This inventory catalogued over 125 unique solutions and presented them in a useful and relavant way – mapped out along the agriculture value chain.

The collection was presented in an intereactive pdf format, downloadable on the GBI Portal, and was promoted through a GBI Tech Talk (more information on these in section #).

Projects such as this were well received and served to promote not only the application of ICTs in development, but also highlight the significance of connectivity in rural development settings.

NEWSLETTER AND SOCIAL MEDIA

With the Portal up and running, and serving as a tool to access information and services from GBI, it was time to begin promoting it. To do this, we turned to social media.

TWITTER

The ICT4D community is very active on Twitter, so this was our first stop. The GBI Twitter account was created in December 2010 and to date has 361 followers. The account was primarily used to promote portal content, publicize GBI projects and accomplishments, engage our target audience, recruit guest bloggers and interns, and raise awareness about GBI and its programs. It addition to it's regular followers, the GBI Twitter account often broadcast messages to the #ICT4D and #USAID hashtags, thereby reaching targeted audiences on the social media platform.

At the time of closing, the GBI Twitter account had sent 731 tweets.

FACEBOOK

GBI also held a Facebook profile and fanpage, those these were less active. Plans for implementation were underway, but even without promotion, we were able to get 140 "likes." GBI had a total of 119 posts, and by June 2012 an average of 50 people saw each post.

E-NEWSLETTER

In addition to the main social media platforms, GBI also published an e-newsletter. This newsletter provided updates on the program as well as highlights from the portal in a shareable, HTML and text version. Subscriptions to the newsletter were steady, reaching 351 in June 2012. Subscribers were found through professional networks, ICT4D events and social media.

These outreach strategies served to work towards accomplishing primarily the goals of raising awareness about GBI, its projects and technical assistance, and ICT4D in general.

TECH TALKS

In addition to its online component, the GBI Communications strategy included in-person events. The GBI Tech Talks were a monthly seminar series, focused on a variety of ICT4D topics. Each session began with an introduction to GBI and the GBI Portal. Speakers from various sectors made presentations, followed by a time for questions.
The following topics were covered in the Tech Talks:

- Participatory Mapping and Youth Engagement

- Low Cost, Low Power Connectivity Solutions

- Working with MNOs

- Gender and ICTs

- Public Private Partnerships in ICT4D

- ICTs for Agriculture on the Value Chain

- ICTs for Environment and Natural Resources Management

Each Tech Talk was video recorded and made available on the GBI Portal and hosted via YouTube. The most popular Tech Talk was on Gender and ICT and has had 237 views to date.

ATTENDANCE

The GBI Tech Talks were held regularly beginning in the summer of 2011 until May 2012. Attendance for the events steadily increased, to the point of standing room only for the more popular topics. A total of 129 people attended the GBI Tech Talks. The demographic breakdown of these attendees is below.

Figure 3. GBI Tech Talks Attendance
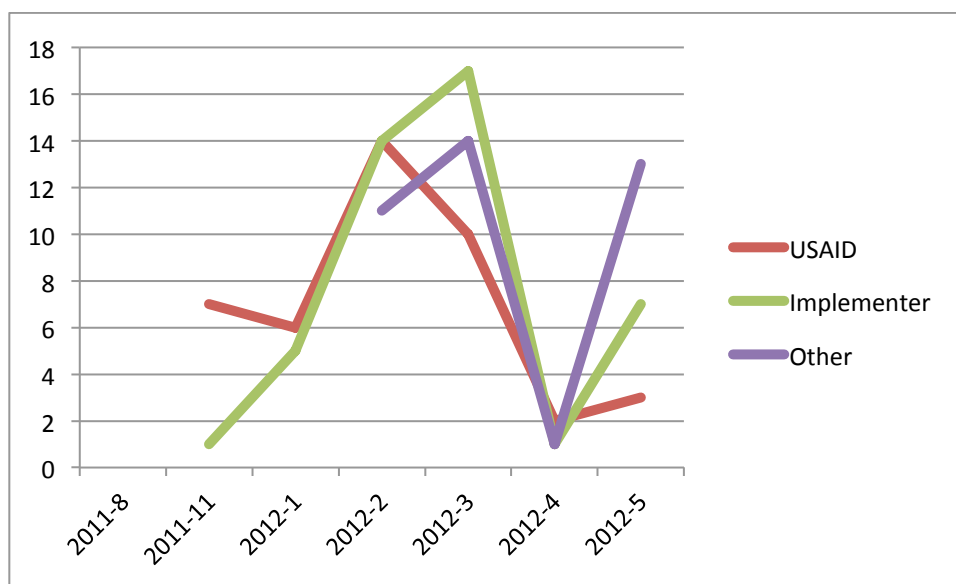
OUTREACH

GBI employed a number of communication methods to promote the GBI Tech Talks. Internally, announcements were sent via General Notice and to the ICT Listserv. Posters are also printed and hung throughout the hallways and elevator bays within USAID. Externally social media and the GBI Newsletter were the key platforms for promotion. And of course, the events were promoted heavily on the Portal. Attendees were regularly surveyed, and it was determined that various USAID listservs were the most effective method of promoting the events.

Figure 4. No. of Tech Talk Attendees Reached by Communication Method
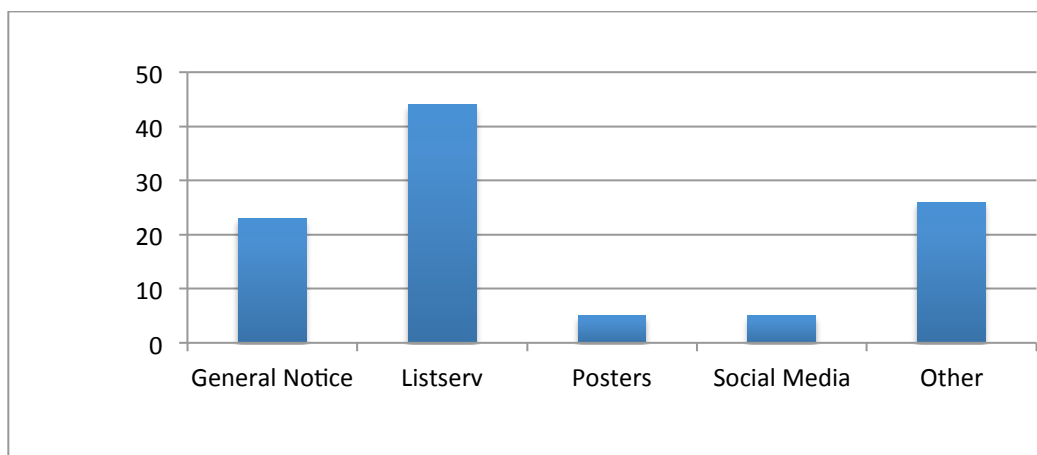
OBJECTIVE #1 RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT GBI AND ITS SERVICES

The GBI Tech Talks were very successful in promoting the GBI Program. According to surveys, 28% of attendees had not heard of GBI before the Tech Talk.

OBJECTIVE #2 RAISE AWARENESS/INCREASE CAPACITY ON ICT4D

Overall, attendees reported a high satisfaction with the GBI Tech Talks. Of those polled, 100% reported their overall evaluation of the Tech Talk they attended as being "Very Good" or "Good"

Most importantly, 100% of respondents also indicated that they learned something new at the Tech Talk they attended, and 92% indicated they would be likely or very likely to attend another GBI Tech Talk in the future.

PRINTED PIECES

Lastly, GBI employed a variety of printed materials to help raise awareness about the program and its services, as well as raise awareness about ICT4D in general.

A number of "one-pagers" were written, primarily by USAID personnel, then properly formatted and branded, and distributed at events, via email, and in some cases, via download on the GBI Portal.

In addition to the "one-pagers" a full color, four page brochure was created, describing the program, its services and approach as well as its partnerships. These brochures were very popular and were useful in events as well as face-to-face meetings.

One pager titles included the following:

- Connectivity, Mobile and Innovation

- GBI Internal Services

- GBI Overview- Telecommunications Infrastructure

- GBI Alliance- Implementing Instrument

- GBI Initiatives

- Program Specific Support

- Supporting Telecom Infrastructure

- Technical Assistance for USF

- Closing the Urban-Rural Divide

- Digital Development

- Extending Access to Rural Communities

- Clean Energy and ICT

- ICT Assessments

- ICT National Planning

- Legal and Regulatory Reform

- mApps and Broadband for Development

- Mobile for Development

- Network-Enabled Applications

- Program Specific Support

- Rural Business Solutions

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report was to outline Integra's communication efforts to support the Global Broadband and Innovations Program. As indicated, Integra met and exceeded each of its required deliverables related to communications plans and products for the project. The GBI Program Manager described the portal as "professional, looks good and is user friendly." (Email, July 2, 2010)

Although communication activities officially ended in June 2012, Integra continues to receive inquiries and social media activity for the program.